

## Testimony of the Czech Republic's leader

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*Martine (far right) with STF members she had invited to the Czech Republic.*

I was born in France in 1962. In 1987, I met my spiritual mother in San Francisco, in the United States. After the two-day Divine Principle workshop, I joined CARP. At that moment, I felt that I had finally reached my destination. (I was at that time doing a world trip, looking for something that could change my life and give hope to others.) For eight years, I followed the Formula Course in American CARP. These years planted seeds in me, to be able to keep going, no matter what the situation is.

At that time, we were blessed to receive lots of guidance from a hundred Japanese CARP leaders that Father had sent to the US. I must say, the internal guidance that we received to support us in our challenges were so profound and so aligned with the Divine Principle that they helped me to grow and to go beyond my Christian concepts. In 1992, I was blessed to another CARP member; he was from Czechoslovakia and had also joined US CARP.

### **Russia and then Prague**

I also had the privilege to attend many of True Father's sermons at Belvedere. At that time, the focus was to educate Russian young people with Divine Principle. In 1994, my husband and I went for a year as missionaries to Russia, where we could see the foundation that our movement had made in just a few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In 1996, we moved to my husband's hometown, Prague, in the Czech Republic. His family had emigrated in 1968, after they lost hope because of the Russian invasion during the Prague Spring. After settling down, starting to have children and developing a business, I became the Prague Church leader in 2005 through a lottery conducted by our national messiah. At that time, the Czech Republic was going through a difficult time, because we lacked both a national leader and a Prague church leader. The church also had financial problems. I felt God calling me; I had to do something for the nation. Just a few weeks later, in September 2005, we heard that True Parents were coming to our nation on their world tour for the UPF inauguration. Everybody was shocked; quickly, we had to pull ourselves together in order to organize the event successfully. A young national leader was appointed from Slovakia at that time.

In July 2006, True Mother came on her speaking tour, and in September, the True Grandchildren came. These events helped us develop determination to reach goals, to set up conditions to unite with our True Parents, and to move the providence forward. In 2007, our regional president asked me to become the national leader. I must say that accepting this position was one of the hardest decisions I had to make in my life. I knew that if I said yes, I would have to overcome many challenges. Also, I felt that it is not entirely natural for a woman to be the national leader.

### **Kingly encouragement**

One day, I had a spiritual experience as I was walking in the park where we have our national holy ground is.

As I was coming closer to the Prague Castle, I suddenly had the feeling that the past kings stood aligned and were looking at me passing by. One king, Charles IV (1346–1378), who is known as the father of the Czech nation suddenly spoke to my heart. He tried to encourage me, telling me not to worry, that I would have support and that he himself also had had to come from France to help this nation. This gave me internal energy. I felt support from the good spiritual world. That feeling has remained until today.

### **Revitalization**

One of the challenges that the Czech Republic was facing was that for so many years no new members had joined the movement. After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, so many bright young people had joined. But at some point, came difficulties and division, just as in the Czech history with the first conflict between Catholics and Protestants.

At first, I felt that I had to make this church a happy church, so I invested effort to make it warm and friendly. Also, we found ways to recover from our debts, by reevaluating everything: spending, properties, etc. Gradually, we could solve issues. By now, we have an FFWPU Council of twelve members plus the national leader; six are appointed based on their missions and the general membership elects six for two-year terms. The council convenes four times a year, and it is working well.

### **Going back to my roots**

Next, I felt that we need young people again joining our movement; like new blood that will give hope to others. One day, one sister came from another town -- České Budějovice. She told me that she wants to support me in rebuilding CARP in this nation. I made it an immediate priority. We sold the national car, and with that money, we created a small CARP Center. The first days were not easy. We needed to overcome a spiritual wall. We invited the Special Task Force (STF) to work with us, and we started to witness on campuses and on the streets. The first new member joined, and then the next came and more came. They are bright and high-quality young people. Some of them are studying for doctorate degrees; others are accomplished artists.

### **We are advancing**

Today, CARP exists again in our nation, and the way is open for young first-generation members to meet True Parents. Since they came to our church, everything has brightened. At our Sunday services, we have music now from our Music Ministry band. Street witnessing and Divine Principle workshops are going on again. Czech CARP also uses nice lecture rooms available at different universities free of charge.

They are giving there public lectures on various topics, and later inviting guests to the Center to study Divine Principle. Now I remember that in the beginning it was difficult for many of our members to believe that young people could again join in our nation. When the Pope visited the Czech Republic a few years ago, he said that this nation is the most atheistic nation in the world. Yet, our faith and perseverance has paid off... Of course, we have to broaden our foundation more, but we can say that the dream, to have new young people joining our church, has come true!